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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8931
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1937
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5415
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9008
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6584
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4403
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2392
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000260

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (Classification upgrade due to para 8)

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TAGS: [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA: AMCIT ACCUSED OF SWIMMING TO AUNG SAN SUU
KYYI HOUSE; TWO OTHERS BEING DEPORTED

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) On May 7, Embassy Rangoon received a diplomatic note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) stating that an American citizen taken into custody May 6 while swimming in Inya Lake had admitted to entering the Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) compound located on the lake and spending two nights in her residence. We have not yet gained consular access to the individual and cannot confirm this report, which also appeared in state Burmese- and English-language newspapers. In a separate matter, authorities are deporting two Americans who conducted Embassy-sponsored journalism training in Rangoon and Mandalay; they are scheduled to depart the country the evening of May 7. The Embassy has spoken with the two Americans, who were given no reason for the expulsion. End Summary.

SWIMMER ALLEGEDLY SPENDS TWO NIGHTS IN ASSK'S HOME

2. (SBU) On the morning of May 7, Embassy Rangoon received a diplomatic note dated May 6 from MOFA indicating that authorities had apprehended American Citizen John Yeattaw (sic.) while he was swimming in Inya Lake early on the morning of May 6. The diplomatic note said that upon interrogation, the AmCit revealed he arrived in Rangoon on May 2, swam to Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) house (located on the shore of Inya Lake) on May 3, and remained there until May 5. The May 7 edition of the Burma Government newspaper "New Light of Myanmar" reported that authorities arrested the man as he was swimming away from ASSK's home early on the morning of May 6. The article also said that "further investigation is being made to find out his motive for secretly entering the area that is out of bounds on security grounds." A state Burmese language newspaper carried a similar account.

3. (SBU) AmCit John Yettaw (correct spelling) registered with the Embassy in November 2008, apparently during a previous visit to Burma. At that time, he signed a limited

waiver, which the Consular Section utilized today to contact Mr. Yettaw's wife (per septel). Charge phoned MOFA officials May 7 seeking immediate consular access to Mr. Yettaw, which has not yet been granted. Embassy's Regional Security Officer has made the same request to Special Branch police, who confirmed Mr. Yettaw is in custody but have said they are continuing to question him before deciding whether to detain him longer or deport him. They have told RSO they will inform the Embassy when consular access will be granted.

¶4. (SBU) The police on May 7 closed the portion of University Avenue in front of ASSK's home to all pedestrian and vehicle traffic. (Note: The Chancery building is located a short way farther along the same road. Access to the Chancery is not restricted.) Special Branch report the road was closed so police could carefully search ASSK's house and compound following the reported intrusion. We note that ASSK's personal physician, Dr. Tin Myo Win, was scheduled to visit her May 7 for a routine monthly medical exam, and we are seeking to confirm whether or not that visit took place.

TWO JOURNALISM TRAINERS BEING EXPELLED

¶5. (SBU) In a separate matter, Mandalay authorities ordered two Americans, Karen Coates and Jerry Redfern, to depart for Rangoon by train on May 6. The two AmCits, as part of the Embassy's speaker program, conducted a journalism workshop at the former U.S. Consulate in Mandalay from May 4 to 6 and at the American Center in Rangoon the week before. The authorities in Mandalay were informed of the workshop in advance. Embassy local staff accompanying the AmCits at the time were allowed to stay on in Mandalay. The authorities

declined to explain the departure order for the Americans, saying they were following orders from their superiors.

¶6. (SBU) Upon arrival in Rangoon on May 7, authorities met the AmCits at the train station and escorted them to the Rangoon Immigration Office. The journalism trainers told Embassy Consular and Public Affairs officers who met with them that they are being deported by the GOB on the evening (May 7) flight to Bangkok. GOB authorities have not specified to the trainers or Embassy officers the reason for the expulsion, though we continue to request that information from Special Branch.

¶7. (SBU) The two AmCits previously traveled to Rangoon in January 2009 to conduct a similar workshop at the American Center. Authorities did not hinder that session, nor did they interfere with the workshop at the American Center last week. The AmCits had also concluded their scheduled training sessions in Mandalay before security forces gave their orders.

Comment

¶8. (C) The swimmer incident appears bizarre. We hope to gain a better picture of the circumstances once we receive Consular access. In the meantime, stories are swirling around Rangoon. The swimmer was caught not far from the Charge/DCM compound on Inya Lake, and one rumor reports police arrested a "foreigner" who was preparing to attack the Charge. While we have flagged the rumor with Special Branch, the likeliest explanation is a mistaken presumption of the AmCit swimmer's motives, based on his location. The AmCit PD trainers' expulsions are yet another mystery. One hopes Special Branch will shed some light.

DINGER